

THE SPUR OF FATE

By Ashley Towne

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His utterance was checked by his interest in his companion's conduct. She seemed to be indulging in some sort of strange and violent exercise under her cloak.

"If I could only be rid of this!" she cried at last between her clenched teeth, and suddenly she thrust out her right hand.

Darrell was amazed to perceive that there was a handcuff upon her wrist, from which the other iron swung by a chain.

"You will think me a criminal, I suppose," said she, "but—"

"On the contrary," said he, "I perceive you to be the victim of a crime. There was, then, some one in the carriage with you?"

"Yes."

"And you were being taken away against your will?"

"I was."

"The matter grows clear," said Darrell. "May I ask what became of the abductor, the man who was in the cab with you?"

"He sprang out when you stopped the horses," she replied. "He supposed—and so did I—that it was an attempt at rescue by my friends."

Darrell was engaged in testing the size of the handcuff with reference to the very pretty hand which it restrained.

It was a white hand, a warm hand, altogether a most delightful hand to hold in one's own in the light of two bright brown eyes. Darrell was obliged to squeeze it as he had never squeezed a woman's hand before, for surely it had never fallen to his lot to find one in such an embarrassing predicament.

"Your friends?" said he, pressing the hand into the smallest possible compass and glancing at the eyes to see how much pain he was causing. "I will take you to them."

"No," she replied; "I must not go near them. I cannot bring them into peril. Oh, really that hurts, my friend; but don't stop, if there's a chance of freeing me, I can bear it."

"Pull!" said Darrell, his face contorted as if it were he that bore the pain.

"Gently, with caution. It is not to be feared, this hand so white, free, by jingo!" The last words in English, for one's native tongue is best in moments of congratulation.

"Free, and no great harm done, thank the Lord!"

"I speak no English or only a very little," she said. "But I understood what you said. Yes, I am free, thanks to you, as free as I am ever likely to be. And my hand is not torn, though my wrists are, but not by you."

She exhibited the evidences of cruel usage, and Darrell's face blazed with wrath.

"If I had known this!" he began. "But that is like boasting. We will wait until I have found the men who did it. Why was it done? I cannot understand how any one could have thought it necessary."

"The man whom you encountered did it," she replied. "I was captured in a narrow and dark street as I was leaving the house of some friends of mine. The man who seized me thrust a gag into my mouth, but one can always make a little noise, so he put these upon my wrists and twisted them to torture me into silence as he led me to the carriage. The other, whom I found inside the vehicle, was much more merciful. He did not torture me. Indeed he removed the gag and silenced me only by putting his hand over my mouth. Upon my word, I think the fellow was a gentleman, more or less."

"Much less, I should say," replied Darrell. "And now what shall we do? We can't wait here, you know. Shall I get the cab?"

"One word," she said, laying her hand upon his arm. "What do you think of me?"

"I will tell you frankly," he replied. "In the first place let me say that I am quite sure I know the man whom I threw down from the box of that carriage. I did not immediately recognize him, for I had no clear view of his face, yet unless I am greatly mistaken he was a Russian officer, one who held the title of captain, but had not the air of a military man; probably a secret agent of the government. Then this capture was in the nature of an arrest, one of those quiet affairs that are outside the law of the land. It follows, then, my friend, that you are a nihilist."

"I swear to you that I am not!" she said, with impressive earnestness. "I am a friend of liberty, but no friend of



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assassination. Of course there are many nihilists who could say the same—the vast majority, in fact—but I am not one of them. I know not of what I may be suspected."

"And I," said Darrell, "care not. You are in trouble, and I am going to help you. I am on your side, my child. Do you understand? Whatever you desire shall be accomplished if it lie within my small capacity."

"I would not lead you into danger," she replied. "You have saved me from utter destruction, and I should make a poor return."

"If there is one thing that I despise more than another in a man," said Darrell, "it is prudence. Thank heaven, it was left out of me entirely. Let us find a cab."

"What can she do? She cannot take me to her home."

Darrell turned more directly toward her. From the brightly lighted street there came a glow sufficient to illuminate the interior of the carriage, and the girl's face was clearly defined.

"Why not?" he asked. "My friends have nothing to fear from the czar's spies. The fact that you are persecuted and pursued will merely make them the more anxious to befriend you. They are not afraid of anything, and, as for annoyance, heaven help the man who tries to annoy Robert Gordon. I have known him a good many years. Therefore I say to you, Why not?"

"There is no reason whatever," she said, looking him straight in the eyes. "I am Vera Shevaloff, the daughter of a prince. I am of the house of Konstantin of Stavropol."

"Stavropol?" exclaimed Darrell. "Why are you surprised?"

"Because I have recently met Ivan Getchikoff, son of the governor general of the province," answered Darrell. "I saw him this afternoon in the company of Ladislov, the man whom I believe to have been the coachman of your prison on wheels. It cannot be that Getchikoff assisted him in that enterprise?"

"If it was he, I did not recognize him," she replied. "I doubt, indeed, whether I should know Ivan in broad daylight, and this man I scarcely saw at all."

"I think he would be above such work," said Darrell.

"The Getchikoffs are proud," she said, "but cruel as wolves. They are all powerful in Stavropol today, both in the city and the province. It is probable that I should have been taken there for some form of trial, though as to that I am merely making a guess. I have no means of knowing what would have been done with me except that I should eventually have been sent back to Siberia."

"Sent back?" exclaimed Darrell. "Have you been there?"

"I accompanied my father," she answered calmly. "Upon the downfall of my family four years ago he was exiled, and my mother and myself chose to share his fate, though we might have avoided it. As to what we suffered, there are now many books which describe the long journey and the horrors that are reserved for those who survive it. My mother lived more than two years after we reached the prison settlement to which we were assigned; my father, some months longer. In Stavropol, my friend, there is a cathedral which my father built, and within it is a tomb of white marble. The snows of Siberia are whiter than the marble, and perhaps my father and my mother sleep as well in one place as another. Let us not think of it."

"But you?" exclaimed Darrell. "You escaped?"

"I was released."

"Then how can you be sent back?"

"Because," said Vera, extending a white hand from the folds of the cloak into the light and holding it caressed in a peculiar manner, "in order to avoid a fate worse than Siberian exile I drove a knife into the heart of Nicholas Gorski, governor of the district."

"Thank God!" gasped Darrell involuntarily.

"The order for my release had already arrived," Vera continued, "and Gorski dared not suppress or delay it. I knew what must happen the instant that I heard of the arrival of the order, and so I prepared the knife for myself. But circumstances made it possible for me to sheath it elsewhere than in my own breast. It was all very fortunate. I am told that six months had elapsed and I was far from Siberia before the suspicion arose that I had struck him down. His death was a mystery. Even now, if I were disposed to deny it in a fair tribunal, the act could not be proved. That is why I shall never be openly arrested outside of Russia."

"You came to Paris?"

"Eventually, yes. But I have been in many parts of Europe, even in Stavropol, though that was a great risk, for the Getchikoffs, who plotted and accomplished my father's destruction, would make short work with me. I went to obtain funds that he had hidden, and I was successful. Since coming to Paris I have harbored with nihilists, and that is why I am unable to seek any refuge this night. If I am an object of pursuit upon my own account, I must not attract the bounds toward another quarry. Now you have my story. Shall you tell it to Mrs. Gordon?"

"Most certainly," answered Darrell, "and the sooner the better. I am only sorry that you cannot go with me into the hall, but unmasked it would not be best. I am afraid to leave you alone in the carriage."

"It is impossible that they should have followed me," she said. "I shall not be alarmed."

Darrell glanced out of the cab window.

"We are in the Rue Blanche," he said. "It is the Church of La Trinite that we have just passed to the left there. It is a matter of five minutes now. By heaven, I wish it were not necessary to leave you!"

"I think it would be best for you," said she, "to leave me forever. I am a dangerous companion for you or for your friends. It is monstrous that I should permit you to interest them in me. Why is it not best that I should take the hint you have given me and ride in this cab all night?"

"Alone?" cried Darrell. "If I am to desert you in that way, let the driver take us to the river first. I am not the man who could live after such treason. And, besides, you haven't any money to pay the fellow in the morning, which reminds me that I must lend you some, for it isn't safe to be without it in Paris for a minute."

"I cannot take it," protested Vera, and while they were disputing upon this point the carriage rolled out into the Place Blanche and presently stopped amid a press of vehicles before the portals of the Moulin Rouge.

Darrell directed the catman to go on a little way, and then alighted. Immediately he was aware of two figures, man and woman, who were hurrying toward him. The man was frocked like a gray friar, with cord and cowl; the woman wore a fawn colored domino, and she twirled a mask by its cord. She had abundant dark brown hair, and she was tall, like Vera. Her companion was a six footer, and he looked a giant in his gray robe.

"I beg your pardon," he said in English. "Are you done with the cab? All these are engaged."

"You leave the ball early," said Darrell, without answering the question. "Is it less interesting than usual?"

"We say goodbye to Paris at sunrise," the young man replied. "Isn't that best? We have just time to get to our lodgings and finish packing. You are an American, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Darrell. "I'm an American, as you are, and I'm in a bit of a fix also, as you are. You want a cab, and I want to go into the hall with my friend, but we can't do it without costumes. If we don't get any, I shall be obliged to go in alone, and she will wait in the cab; so you can't have it. If, on the other hand, you will sell me your frock—are you dressed completely under it?"

"Oh, yes, I'm dressed all right."

"And as to the domino? Could it be spared?"

"How funny!" exclaimed the young woman, with a laugh. "But everything happens in Paris. Certainly your friend can have the domino. Somebody spilled a glass of beer on the back of it"—and she turned to reveal the stain—"but if your friend doesn't mind that?"

"The stain is an advantage," replied Darrell. "What says the monk?"

"My frock for the cab!" cried the friar. "It is yours."

Darrell protested that he must pay the worth of the dresses—indeed much more—and he succeeded in forcing the young man to accept a sum that was probably an agreeable addition to his exchequer. Then the two women got into the cab, and it was Vera in mask and domino who got out. Meanwhile Darrell in the shadow of the vehicle had slipped the monk's frock over his head.

"I have made her a present of my cloak," whispered Vera. "She fancies that I am a millionaire upon a trifling escapade. She will change her opinion about my wealth when she views the cloak by daylight. It has seen hard service."

"I might give the gentleman my opera hat," replied Darrell, "or your handkerchiefs. But the latter I value too highly as a souvenir, and the former, closed, lies asleep in the bosom of my gown. And now for cabby."

He beckoned to the driver, who climbed down from the box.

"Fifty francs for you," said Darrell, "and as much more tomorrow evening if you are discreet. Do you understand? You will forget everything. Call there at 6 tomorrow."

He gave the man his card, upon which was written the address of a club.

"Why do you bribe him?" asked Vera.

"If any successful attempt is made to trace you," replied Darrell, "this man will be found, and if that happens I want to know of it. Meanwhile these costumes are great luck."

The unfrocked monk leaned from the cab window and gave directions to the coachman. Vera and Darrell, turning away, waved their hands in farewell.

The portal of the Moulin Rouge was beset by such a throng that Darrell and his companion passed through unnoticed. But a moment later, as they worked their way out of the press, a couple dressed as sailors, the woman's costume being like the man's in the minutest detail, accosted them with merry badinage.

"We knew you weren't going away," said the woman. "You were afraid of drinking too much wine."

"Mistaken identity," laughed Darrell in Vera's ear. "I hope our friends were well behaved, for their reputation has passed to us. Now to find the Gordons. What a lark! And I told Gordon this afternoon that I would never have any more fun!"

"There is, however," said Darrell, "such a thing as instinctive recognition of individual character. I have seen



"I am Vera Shevaloff."

good and bad women, very many of both, and I have seen women of birth and breeding and others who lacked those advantages. Such being the case, though I have known you less than an hour, I am not troubled by the smallest doubt. I shall tell Mrs. Gordon exactly what has happened; I shall tell her precisely what I believe of you, and then, if I know her—"

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WOULD PIPE GAS TO JOPLIN

Franchise Granted by Joplin City Council to a Natural Gas Company

Every town in southeastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri and also Kansas City has been looking with longing and envious eyes towards the natural gas belt for years. Most of them have tried to find gas themselves have failed and in the failure have only become the more anxious to enjoy the luxuries of it. Already this week reports have been sent out from Kansas City and Galena that natural gas would be piped to those cities from the Iola field. Last week the Joplin city council granted a franchise to a company of Kansas City men and the dispatch says that the gas is to come from Iola. Helms who was to furnish the gas for Kansas City claimed to have an abundance of gas land but it is not known whether the Kansas City men who have the Joplin franchise are backed by Helms or not. The following dispatch from the Kansas City Journal tells the story in detail:

Joplin, Mo., June 5. The city council tonight granted a franchise to a company of Kansas City capitalists, represented by ex-Fire Chief Hale, of that city, for the purpose of furnishing natural gas to the citizens of Joplin. The company claims to own several thousand acres of producing gas land in the Iola gas district, and is asking for franchises in Galena, Kas., and Webb City, and Carterville, Mo., to be connected with the Joplin pipe line. The distance from Joplin to the Iola natural gas field is sixty miles, and it is intended to use a ten inch pipe for the supply. The company has obligated itself to furnish natural gas at a maximum rate of 50 cents per thousand cubic feet. This cuts the present rate one half.

The Wilson Case Reversed

REGISTER readers will remember the case of State vs James Wilson, the contractor who built the north school house and was charged with working his men over eight hours a day. The case was set for trial and the witnesses subpoenaed at the last October term of court before Cap. Ewing, who was judge pro tem in the absence of Judge Stillwell. The information was quashed and the defendant discharged on the ground that school districts did not come within the purview of the law because such bodies were not specifically named in the act. Union laborers were intensely interested in the case and county Attorney Goshorn at once appealed the case to the supreme court. Saturday that court handed down an opinion in which it held that all public bodies such as school districts come within the law and that contractors working for such bodies must not work their laborers over eight hours a day.

Therefore contractors who build the new school house in Iola and the one in Gas City will be compelled to work under the provisions of the eight hour law. The case just decided is one that affects the whole State and several prosecutions in this State have been lying dormant awaiting the decision of the supreme court in this one.

The question was a close one, and the court in their opinion say "that cities are the only real municipalities in this State, still it was the intention of the legislature to include school districts in the term municipalities."

Read it in His Newspaper

George Schaub, a well known German citizen of New Lebanon, Ohio, is a constant reader in the Dayton Volkszeitung. He knows that this paper aims to advertise only the best in its columns, and when he saw Chamberlain's Pain Balm advertised therein for lame back, he did not hesitate in buying a bottle of it for his wife, who for eight weeks had suffered with the most terrible pains in her back and could get no relief. He says: "After using the Pain Balm for a few days my wife said to me, 'I feel as though born anew,' and before using the entire contents of the bottle the unbearable pains had entirely vanished and she could again take up her household duties." He is very thankful and hopes that all suffering likewise will hear of the wonderful recovery. This valuable liniment is for sale by W. L. CRAIG & Co., CAMPBELL & BURELL.

Mr. Wormwood of Larned, who is visiting in Great Bend, is supposed to have his gail with him.

Cholera Morbus a Dangerous Disease

In many cases attacks of cholera morbus terminate fatally before medicine can be procured or a physician summoned. The safe way is to keep on hand a reliable medicine for use in such cases. For this purpose there is nothing so sure as Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy. W. E. Bosworth, of Lafayette, Ala., says: "In June, 1900, I had a serious attack of cholera morbus and one dose of Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy gave me relief in fifteen minutes." For sale by W. L. CRAIG & Co., CAMPBELL & BURELL.

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